

126 PROBLEMS OF THE PACIFIC

assuring us, a remarkable number of German deserters are ready and even eager to give their enemies information most damaging to the interests of their government.

There are many reasons why Dr. Solf will have to be disappointed. His disappointment is easy to understand (though the commercial value of the German colonies in the Pacific is not very great), for it was a German firm that first organised the trade of the Pacific Islands.

In the early seventies the great Hamburg firm of Godefroy had agents for produce in almost every group. Their agents had very careful instructions to abstain from mixing in native politics, and to devote themselves solely to getting all the trade into their hands. Their modern representatives still have agencies in Polynesia, but much of their business has got into the hands of English colonial firms, and twenty years ago a German steamer, subsidised by the German Government, solemnly ploughed her way from island to island with empty holds, while the German traders were loading the Sydney and Auckland steamers to the hatchways.

Few of the larger groups of islands now belong to the nation that discovered them. The British flag was hoisted over Tahiti and New Caledonia, which now belong to the French ; over Hawaii, which is American ; and over what was German New Guinea. The Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides were formally annexed by Spain. The periods of discovery fall naturally into centuries. The sixteenth century belongs to the Spanish, the seventeenth to the Dutch and the eighteenth to the French and the English, but neither the Spanish or the Dutch now hold any territory in the Pacific. The